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LIGHTS AND SHADOWS OF LONDON LIFE.

BOXING-NIGHT.

THERE is a day in December upon which, although it takes place during Christmas-time, class is set against class more than on any other day in the year. The poor rejoice in it, but the rich grumble exceedingly; the kitchen is uproarious with merriment, but the drawing-room floor, and especially 'the study,' where Paterfamilias sits, are shrouded in gloom.

'Please, sir, the postman,' exclaims our parlour-maid, in cherry-coloured ribbons, and with cherry cheeks, for the postman has probably kissed her; 'and please, sir, the dustman' (who, let us hope, has not ventured upon such a liberty); 'and please, sir, the grocer's young man has called for himself and his partner.'

'Then I am not his parloner,' returns Paterfamilias, stung into repartee.—'And where is the money to come from, my dear,* I should like to know, for all these Christmas boxes? I wish there was no such thing as Boxing-day in the calendar.'

He might just as well wish that there was no such periodical as Lady-day. It is the great red-letter day of the year to all the lower classes of London, from linen-draper's assistants down to costermongers, and is becoming, so to speak, *redder* annually. It is made more of a festival, 'allowed' by the great employers of London labour more and more, and may fairly be considered the great metropolitan holiday. Christmas-day, which would otherwise enjoy that pre-eminence, has a smack of Sunday about it; and the Derby-day is only a holiday under the rose. Under these circumstances, it has become absolutely necessary that Boxing-day should be fitly chronicled; and when we say 'fitly,' it will be understood that we mean chronicled by our Home Correspondent. The only obstacle to this arrangement was, that since the feast in question is chiefly remarkable for its

evening amusements, our H. C. had to break through his well-known domestic habits, and go out at night. However, the nature of the enterprise being explained to him, he undertook it at once, and cheerfully; and indeed, it is our opinion, that his noble nature is so constituted that he would tread the Path of Duty, even though it led through a Garrotte-walk. Here follows the result of his experience:

If you would see Boxing-night in its true colours—which are bright even to gaudiness—you must patronise a transpontine pantomime, and not the Halls of Dazzling Delight at 'the Lane' or 'the Garden.' 'The gallery' at the two great national theatres is composed of materials too aristocratic for our purpose; the tariff of admission thereto being prohibitive even to exclusion. Such persons would occupy the stalls in the places of amusement of 'the people,' and in full evening costume; or, in other words, they would keep their coats on. As soon, therefore, as the H. C. had received his instructions, he took a Hansom from his Belgravian residence to the Theatre-royal, Putt Street, and bespoke the stage-box for the 26th of December. Not, be it understood, from any feeling of pride; but firstly, because he suspected (very justly, as it turned out) that he would be a little too crowded elsewhere to make his philosophic observations; and secondly, because his expenses are defrayed by his proprietors. The price of the privilege thus demanded was 10s. 6d.; and the H. C. tendered a five-pound note in payment thereof. Now, the man inside the little light-house with the pigeon-hole (through which to receive the prices of admission), had been a good deal staggered by my wanting the stage-box at all; and when he beheld the note, I saw the idea strike him like lightning, that the whole proceeding was an ingenious swindle, and an attempt to pass 'flash' paper.

'It won't do, my friend,' said he, with a grim smile; and then, perceiving my look of virtuous indignation, he added dryly: 'We haven't got so much money in the treasury.'

'Here is five shillings,' observed I calmly,

*The expression 'My dear' is, of course, addressed not to the parlour-maid, but to Materfamilias, who has looked in to see how 'papa' takes it.

'which you may retain by way of deposit; only be sure that the box is kept for me.'

At the word 'deposit,' the man's countenance changed from suspicion to benignity. He explained, with great civility, that he was not himself empowered to receive so vast a sum, but that there was an individual within who would take it upon his own responsibility, and give me a written acknowledgment. This document, which cost me a shilling to the man who wrote it, cost me another to the cabman, on account of the period consumed in its due and proper execution; and my belief is, that the person of responsibility could not write his name, and that the manager had to be sent for from some suburban residence for that purpose. The pantomime in Putt Street, instead of being the last piece to be represented, as is usual, preceded the rest of the performances; for a Boxing-night audience in that locality is not remarkable for patience, but must behold their favourite spectacle at once. The hour of commencement being seven, this Home Correspondent (whose sense of duty is equal to that of the conscientious actor who, in order to perform Othello, blacked himself all over) arrived in the neighbourhood a little after six; and I write 'in the neighbourhood' by design, since Putt Street was by that time quite blocked up by a fanatical public, who had been already assured three times that the Theatre-Royal was full to suffocation. To a person of my delicate frame and spiritual organisation, any attempt to force a passage would have been futile; nor is it probable that my powers of persuasion, however fascinating, would have induced the multitude to make way for me; I might just as well have expected them to recognise my genius by strewing chaplets of roses; but I had taken the precaution to bring a friend with me broad in the shoulders, and who has a very winning way with him—which some persons might almost stigmatise as forwardness—in a crowded thoroughfare. Towed in his wake—but by no means a jolly-boat, for I was almost stove in by elbows—I managed to reach the centre of the throng, and perceive distinctly the words, 'No standing-room,' stuck up in front of the theatre.

As this piece of information did not produce the slightest effect upon those around me, I endeavoured to ignore it also, and to pass the time in taking mental notes of my neighbours. They were doubtless a rough set, and those of them who chanced to be brought before the sitting magistrate upon the following day were probably described as 'ruffians' by the reporters; but they possessed a good-nature under trying circumstances which cannot be too highly eulogised. If an oath was heard here and there, it was rapped out from evil habit, without malice, just as a horse with corn in him kicks in play; and although there were one or two wicked savages, who made 'rushes' from time to time, such as are sometimes fatal to the weakly in throngs of that sort, there was a general disposition to protect the women and children, and make the crush as bearable for them as possible. It was no place, one would have thought, for the weaker sex to be in at all, but they were there in hundreds, and a young mother close to me—reduced as by hydraulic pressure to her least proportions—was feeding her baby. The child, though rather flat, did not seem to suffer any inconvenience; but the crinoline of its parent had

snapped in forty places, and had lost all power to rasp people. Immediately behind me was a little man, 'a tailor by trade,' as I imagine, who had come out under the protection of his wife. 'Come,' said she, 'this is getting too much of a crush for you, Jerry: let us be off.'

'Pooh, pooh,' replied he, sidling away, though, as he spoke—for he was a foot and a half shorter than anybody else, and stood in darkness, and an atmosphere of indescribable density—'I can bear what any woman can, I suppose.'

I never shall forget the tone of contemptuous pity with which his better and bigger half responded: 'Lor, Jerry!'

This lady appeared so wise and prudent, that I inquired of her whether there was no other way but this impassable one into the Theatre-royal, and she informed me that there was a stage-door at the back of the House; 'and likewise, added she, 'a gallery; but that won't do for such as you.' The aristocratic character of the H. C., although he had a billy-cock hat on, being apparent to this far-sighted female.

In the back street, the crowd was not so great, because the doors there had been advertised to close at 6.30, and had done so, as far as it was practicable. But the stage-door had been driven off its hinges, and was only restored broadways; so that the pantomime itself, in its highest features—the flying fairies and so forth—could be distinctly seen over the top of it, and afforded unspeakable satisfaction to hundreds at a very cheap rate. In the aperture, however, stood a stout dramatic character—a demon, as I think—obscuring as much of the gorgeous vision as possible, and flicking with the lash of a hunting-whip as many persons as he could reach with that formidable weapon. 'This ain't the right door, I tell you,' was his continued cry. 'You must go round into Putt Street. I should be ashamed, I should, of seeing a pantomime for nothin. Here's a mean lot! [This was addressed to the H. C. and his indignant companion.] What! you can't afford fourpence, can't you, for a seat in the gallery?' And for once his audience sympathised with this hateful personage, and exclaimed as with a single voice: 'No, they haven't got a tanner between them.'

Never, surely, were two gentlemen, about to occupy the stage-box of a theatre-royal, placed in so false a position.

Again proceeding to the front entrance, we found a policeman explaining to his hereditary enemies, the British public, that they had much better seek a pantomime elsewhere, since here, in Putt Street, it was not to be seen, even though they should stand upon one another's shoulders. The advice was of course unheeded by those to whom it was addressed; but I seized the opportunity to explain our position, as persons who had a right to admittance—Peris against whom the crystal bar of Eden had been most unreasonably put up—and the servant of Justice immediately admitted us, amidst howls of disapprobation. The fairy scene was shut from our gaze at first by tiers of people standing up between us and the dress-circle; and when we had pushed our way to our private box, we found it in possession of no less than seven gentlemen and ladies. It was advertised to 'accommodate' but four people, so that these individuals were all sitting upon one another's laps, in such an interminglement of limb that it

took another policeman to disentangle them. The box-keeper, with his indignant 'Well, I never!' was totally unable to separate the human coil, who exclaimed, like a hydra, with one voice, that they had each paid two shillings for the accommodation, and did not think it cheap at the money—in which I very cordially agreed with them. It went to my heart to disturb them, for they were enthralled with the action of the pantomime, as indeed was every occupant of the house. Sloping up from orchestra to ceiling was a vast bank of human faces, as close together as in those crowded photographs where we have 'fifteen hundred likenesses for a penny,' all eager, craving, hushed. At the back of these, and out of sight, an incessant tumult was kept up by the excluded persons—lately increased by seven—but all whom we could see were dumb. The stalls (for there were stalls) were fortunately not furnished with arms; otherwise, since two persons invariably occupied the place of one, they would have been inconveniently tight. These were patronised either by married folks, or by young persons whose engagement was sufficiently acknowledged in society to admit of their being tender to one another. The protecting arm (in a shirt-sleeve) of the swain, was thrown around his beloved object; and she, on her part, leaned her head upon his manly bosom. The position was demonstrative, but unavoidable; they had nowhere else to put their arms and heads. These persons, like the occupants of the boxes, paid two shillings each for their very limited room; the denizens of the pit paid eightpence, and those of the gallery, as we have already stated, a fourpenny-bit.

Great, however, as the expenditure of the audience must have been, when we consider their position in life, they had still plenty of money left wherewith to purchase refreshments. The drop-curtain, which was let down oftener than usual for this very purpose, gave the nobility and gentry to understand that 'Refreshments could be procured within the establishment, and without leaving their seats, as good as at any house in the neighbourhood.' It also informed them where 'Excellent vans could be procured suitable for parties of pleasure; and also a one-horse hearse.' It was, in fact, a complete advertisement-sheet of trades-people of the locality. Besides these, there was that metropolitan celebrity, Griffiths, with his '*Fire, Thieves, Fire!*' I wished him elsewhere as I sat in that crowded place, and read his words. They suggested to me the awful thought—Suppose there should be a fire! Suppose any one of these tinsel ornaments—not to mention the poor ballet-girls in spangled muslin—should catch fire from the footlights, or the myriad gas-burners, or the red lights at the wings, what a holocaust of victims would there be! Nay, even, should a spectator repeat aloud the words before him, '*Fire, Fire!*' what a hideous scene of selfishness and destruction would ensue! A roar of laughter roused me from these reflections. Gammer Gurton's cow had fallen upon the stage, through some want of concert between its inmates, and the four human legs were kicking one another in the most furious manner. The Dame and some 'supers' assisted to raise the animal; but as soon as it reached the side-scenes, we beheld from our coign of vantage the two performers wriggle forth from their spotted prison, and go to fisticuffs over the empty cow. Circumstances of this sort were of course uproariously applauded; but all the political

or social 'hits,' by no means subtle or obscure ones either, which occurred in the course of the pantomime, were received in solemn silence. The whole audience took their pleasure sadly, although with the most perfect good-humour. The misfortunes of the stage 'Bobby'—a very different character from the strong, stern men in blue who here and there looked calmly on at their caricaturist—alone excited them to mirth; they cheered when he had his head cut off, and it was put into a pie, and wildly clapped their hands when he was turned out, thin and flattened, from the mangling machine. It seemed to me, however, that this antagonism was merely conventional; that the mass of spectators entertained no more genuine animosity against the guardians of the peace, than do the boys who welcome a Guy Faux, against their fellows of the Roman Catholic persuasion. No; what the fifth of November is to his Holiness the Pope, such is Boxing-night to the policeman; it is his time of trial and popular condemnation; but his execution only takes place in effigy, and means nothing after all. Within the walls of the Theatre-Royal, Putt Street, I did not hear one single exclamation of anger or of coarseness; nor was there any spectacle beheld from our stage-box—unless it were shirt-sleeves—which the most modest lady in the land (although I do not say the most prudish) had any need to blush at. This Home Correspondent, who is himself as sensitive as a Vestal Virgin (and even more afraid of Fire), never changed colour once.

LIFE IN POLAND.

IN TWO PARTS.—PART II.

NEXT morning, we continued our pilgrimage. I perceived that the post-houses are kept by Jews; all business being also carried on by them. They are free. It is said that they are intelligent, but they are fearfully dirty in appearance. Though the roads were very bad, sometimes none at all but across fields, they conducted us briskly, with great crying-out and noise, as encouragement to the horses. When we happened to have a Pole, we got on slowly. Count S—, naturally impatient, vented his ill-humour on the unfortunate serf, who said nothing, but with a sullen air continued at the same pace. In this manner we arrived within sight of a stately mansion, our destination. The proprietress, an elderly lady, was known as the lady with the diamonds, on account of the fabulous quantity of precious stones that she possessed. These treasures are the glory and torment of her life. On one occasion, she went to Paris, taking with her but an ordinary supply. Being invited to a fête at court, she wished to out-dazzle all others, but the difficulty was to have her diamonds. There was no one she could intrust to bring them to her; so her husband was despatched. He had to travel day and night in the depth of winter, so as to arrive in time; but when the model husband returned, the hotel-keeper declared that he considered it dangerous to have such treasures in his house, as, through the maids' boasting, the circumstance was known to all the servants. So they had to seek for apartments elsewhere; and finally the diamonds were deposited in the bank. The lady appeared in a fancy costume of such weight that it was impossible to dance, so she was obliged to remain all the evening

like a statue. But for a week all Paris spoke with wonder of the diamonds of the Princess V—, for so she dubbed herself. When one has so many diamonds, it is, of course, impossible to be anything but a princess.

This lady had brought home furniture, objects of art, curiosities, from all parts of Europe. Hers was a complete show establishment; persons came from far and near to visit it. When we arrived, two or three servants, running in one or other direction, went to seek their mistress; another ushered us into a salon. After waiting a quarter of an hour, a maid came, saying that her mistress was in the park, and would be with us immediately. When she left the room, Count S— said that the woman seemed as if she were telling an untruth; whereupon, a diminutive boy, brush and duster in hand, who had been dusting the feet of the table, emerged from under the cover, and said, without addressing himself to any one in particular: 'They will soon be ready; they have been dressing these two hours;' and the imp vanished. We had just time to compose our countenances, when the princess entered, leaning on the arm of her niece, and followed by three poor relatives, whose office was to sing her praises from morning till night, and to enhance the value of all her belongings. She welcomed us, making lengthy excuses at not being ready to receive us when we arrived. I had hoped that finally she would lead us to our rooms, for we were tired, as travellers who had been shut up in a coach all day were likely to be; but she had no intention of the kind. She shewed us divers curiosities, pictures, specimens of mosaic-work. I glanced in despair at the size of the room, and the quantity of things it contained, but that was only the beginning; for there was a second, a third, I know not how many—I believe six or seven. At the third, I sank down on a chair; but as long as the princess had any one to admire her treasures, she was indefatigable. At last we passed to the dining-room, where coffee and ices were served. During the collation, other guests arrived. We were invited to walk in the grounds. Grottoes, fountains, statues, met our view on every side, for when the princess travelled, she purchased everything that could be transplanted or adapted to her northern establishment.

When the hour to dress for dinner approached, we sought our rooms, but did not find them; in fact, the house contained but one single sleeping-apartment, occupied by the princess, niece, and three relatives. This she insisted on our occupying, and had beds made for herself and party on the sofas. There was an empty room for the gentlemen, who were supposed to bring with them whatever they required. There was also a chamber for the maids, with chairs to sit on during the day, and to sleep on at night, if they preferred them to the boards. The valets were accommodated with straw in one of the corridors.

The next morning, in passing through the drawing-room, I saw, on a richly inlaid mosaic-work table, a very primitive earthen pitcher and a tub, which served for the ablutions of the whole family. Half-a-dozen maids were fleeing about—mistress, maids, and apartment in a state of confusion difficult to describe.

At the early breakfast, the princess appeared in a Cashmere morning-dress, wearing a pearl neck-

lace, fastened with a rich diamond clasp, ear-rings and bracelets to match. She afterwards proposed shewing us her dresses; so all her finery and that of her niece was displayed. She also produced her jewellery, of which she possessed enough to adorn the whole country. A quiet-looking individual who appeared at dinner was, I believe, her present husband; she has been married several times, as is common in Poland, although the Poles are Catholics, and divorce is not allowed in that church. I know not how they contrive it, but nothing is more common than to meet a gentleman having two or three wives all alive, or a lady the same number of husbands; and, what is most strange, the parties thus married and unmarried meet on the friendliest terms. This taste for and facility of divorcing leads to unheard-of complications of relationship. I saw various examples of these intricate connections during my sojourn in Poland.

The next family on our list inhabited a wooden house; they had never left their native land. The gentlemen did not speak French at all, and the ladies but very little. The dinner was composed of a quantity of national dishes, beginning with a very acid soup. I saw at breakfast a dish of Indian corn, which they eat in a strange manner; they put butter on it, and then bite it off the stalk. We were also treated with the much-esteemed caviar, composed of salted sturgeons' eggs. The greater part of the day was spent at table. The principal subject of conversation was about an English lady, who, having married a Pole, resided in the neighbourhood. They spoke of the extreme order and cleanliness that reigned in her house as perfectly ridiculous. The gentlemen cited, as an example of her eccentricity, that she would not allow persons to spit about in her drawing-room; and that when one of the guests did so, she rang to have the floor cleaned. One of the most disgusting and inveterate habits of the Poles is spitting. How often at table have I seen delicate-looking, elegantly-dressed women coolly turn round and spit on the floor! In the most splendid drawing-rooms, if you indulge in long robes, you have to pick your steps.

In the evening, we had great screaming of patriotic songs. No doubt the sentiments were fine, but the music was detestable. It was a great relief when the soft, flexible, harmonious voice of Fraulein Muller was heard in one of the beautifully-simple melodies of her native land. Next Count de Vermont favoured us with a French romance, accompanied with great gesticulations, placing his hand on his heart, turning his eyes towards the ceiling. No one understood a word he said, and he sang as often false as otherwise; nevertheless, he was greatly applauded. During the entire performance, Gabrielle, a pretty fair-haired child of six or seven years of age, kept running up and down the room, crying out: 'Vive Garibaldi!' Count de Vermont, who belongs to the extreme Faubourg St Germain, was rather scandalised, but made no remark. The worthy gentleman had come to Poland with a fixed purpose: he is a widower, of very noble name, but very small fortune; he has two daughters, whom he wished to be married; but in France, a match is quite a money affair—equal fortune is expected on both sides; therefore this devoted father, convinced that his daughters would never find husbands in France, had come on a voyage of discovery; and aided by

Countess S—, he accomplished his object, as I may perhaps relate in time and place. He was provided with a very beautiful miniature of each daughter—one fair, the other dark; so there was one for every taste.

The French are much admired and sought after in Poland. Whatever comes from France, is thought perfection by the Poles; the English, on the contrary, are detested. I was thought to be French, so politeness did not oblige them to mask their sentiments. I must say, more unflattering ones for my compatriots, it is not possible to entertain. During my two years' residence in Poland, I never heard a good word said of the English, who feel such sympathy for the Poles.

From the wooden house, we proceeded to a palace, at least so called; the owner of which sonorously-named dwelling was one of the most afflicted of beings. Her husband and sister entertained us; they were persons of extremely pleasing manners, and literary tastes. Mademoiselle Eliska is very accomplished. She has the most beautiful hands I ever saw, and played the piano in perfection. In the evening, she offered to conduct us to see her sister, who, she said, was well enough to receive us. I expected to see an invalid; but what was my surprise and horror when I perceived, reclining on the sofa, a lady whose head seemed out of all proportion. She had what is called the Polish disease (*Plica Polonica*), a frightful malady, unknown in other countries, and it is said, produced by want of cleanliness—that, however, could not be the case in this instance. Each hair swells out like a thick cord; the fable of the Gorgon's head is realised, with the difference, that instead of snakes the hair is a mass of humour or viscous matter. It becomes so much a part of the person, that it is impossible to cut it off without endangering life. Seven years, this unfortunate lady has endured this martyrdom. I was told that there were still some hopes of her recovery. She did not seem to suffer acute pain, and even conversed with animation.

The whole evening, I could think of nothing but the sad spectacle I had witnessed. On the Poles, of course, it did not produce the same impression, as they had seen many instances of it before.

I heard with pleasure that our return to Ostrowski was decided on. The weather was now becoming very cold; and we arrived just before a heavy fall of snow, which rendered the roads impracticable. In each room there was a great stove up to the ceiling. It was one person's sole occupation to light and keep up the fires; he commenced at four o'clock, so that when one got up, the whole house was heated; indeed, too much so. To live constantly in this temperature is very unwholesome, as one cannot open the windows occasionally, as elsewhere; and those who cannot support outdoor exercise, lose their health. This heated air is fatal to ladies' complexions—perhaps that is the reason why they make such liberal use of borrowed ones. We were soon snowed up. Looking through the double windows as far as the eye could reach, you perceived an ocean of snow: those great plains were then more uninteresting than ever. I felt an uncomfortable sensation on beholding the walls of snow that separated me from the rest of Europe.

But at Ostrowski, one could not long indulge in gloomy thoughts. The sledges were soon in readiness, drawn by four or six horses, with their merry

bells; the light sledges, covered in scarlet, flew along with the rapidity of a railway-carriage; occasionally the occupants were thrown on a heap of snow. The ladies, in addition to fur-lined cloaks, had large woollen shawls to cover their heads, arranged so as to leave the eyes, nose, and mouth visible. This head-dress was certainly more useful than becoming. The fur-lined cloak is a great affair with the Poles; they vie with each other in procuring fur of great value. They give as much as three hundred pounds for a cloak. It is like the Cashmere shawl of the French. The Poles remark that strangers cover themselves much less than they do, though, of course, they must suffer more from the intense cold. I have seen both gentlemen and ladies examine reciprocally their fur-cloaks, and make them a subject of conversation for a whole evening. Count de Vermont was in despair at being obliged not only to purchase a cloak for himself, but also a rabbit-skin for Jules, his servant; but Jules despised the rabbit-skin, went out in his Parisian costume, and was nearly frozen to death.

Sometimes the weather was so severe that for weeks we could not venture out; we used to walk up and down the great suite of drawing-rooms, which are not carpeted; the boards being polished as in France. At first, when not initiated to this habit, a gentleman who was seated near me asked me if it would be agreeable to me to 'take a walk.' There was just then a heavy fall of snow, so I looked towards the window rather amazed, perceiving which, he added, 'in the room.'

One day a cousin of Count S—'s arrived; he and his wife were hardly seated when another couple were announced. They seemed all to be on most friendly terms. In the evening, one of the gentlemen played at cards with the two ladies, and a third, who was staying at Ostrowski. When he arrived, Countess S— said to me: 'Is it not curious to see my cousin Alexander playing cards with his three wives?'

'His three wives!' I exclaimed; 'surely you jest.'

'Not at all,' she answered. 'Nothing is more common here. He now regrets having divorced from the first; he liked her best; but she has also married again. They are all very friendly and agreeable to one another.' Countess S— continued: 'You will hardly meet a person in the country who has not been married more than once. The Russians reproach us on our facility for divorce as they marry for life; we, for as long as we please. It is better than living together on ill terms.'

This seemed very startling to me, but it is a fact of which I was convinced from personal observation.

One bitterly cold day, when the very aspect outdoors was enough to make one shudder, Countess S—, Fräulein Muller, and I were making artificial flowers; Anna, who braved I know not how many degrees of cold, was gone on a sledging-excursion with her father. As we were seated near the window, we saw a sledge drawn by six horses coming up the avenue. We were wondering who the courageous visitor could be, when the beautiful Countess Z—, a near neighbour, was announced. On entering, she said to Countess S—: 'I have not a moment to stay, and have something very important to say: my husband intends

proposing for your daughter; he is an excellent man, so I beg of you not to let any delicacy of sentiment on my account be an obstacle to their union. I have already obtained my divorce, and am on the eve of contracting another marriage. I leave for Varsovie this evening. Adieu, dear friend.' So saying, she disappeared as quickly as she had entered. I own that if a thunderbolt had fallen at my feet, I could not have been more surprised. Fräulein Muller and I, who had stood up to leave the room, had not time to gain the door, ere the communication was made. Countess S—— begged of us to remain, and as soon as her friend left, observed, without seeming the least amazed at what she had heard, that Count A—— was too old for Anna. Undoubtedly, he has a very large fortune, but, added she, 'we have almost given our word to another person.' She evidently was nowise shocked at the strange announcement. Accordingly, Count A—— did come next day, made a formal demand, and was refused, Anna's opinion coinciding with that of her parents.

Towards evening, on entering the drawing-room, I perceived, striding up and down, an individual of such Quixotic appearance, that I imagined he was one of our amateur actors wishing to assure himself of the effect of his costume. He was tall, thin, dark, clothed in a loose black velvet coat, which shewed in the front an equally ample blue Cashmere vest, fastened with immense pearls, boots up to the knees, and in his hand a hat ornamented with feathers, adorned with a remarkably large pearl. His wife (a Polish lady) and daughter arrived soon after. The gentleman was a Russian boyard of Armenian descent. For two days, during his stay at Ostrowski, he was invisible; he excused himself to Countess S——, saying that they were fast-days in the Greek Church, and that when he fasted, he was in such bad humour that he dared not appear in company. When the servant—who was not aware that it was fasting-time for the boyard—had brought his breakfast to him in the morning, he had his richly-jewelled watch in his hand. On seeing the temptation, he cried out: 'Leave the room immediately. It is but eight o'clock, and I can taste nothing till evening. Away, do not tempt me.' So saying, he dashed his watch on the floor. As the affrighted servant thought that it was aimed at him, he retreated as quickly as possible.

The fast over, the boyard came out of his retreat. His wife and daughter proceeded on their journey to the frontier: they were going to spend the winter in Italy. It was curious at their departure to see the boyard solemnly giving them his benediction, as the patriarchs of old to their sons, though the boyard is nowise patriarchal, being one of the most futile of men, and speaking of his dress, diamonds, and pearls as a woman might. Apropos of dress: I remarked at a great dinner, at which the governor of the province was present, that Count S—— was in uniform. As he is neither in the army nor navy, that seemed rather extraordinary; but Countess S—— afterwards told me that all Russian proprietors have a uniform, which they seldom wear but on great occasions. If the emperor honours them by resting at their houses in his journeys, it is, I believe, obligatory to appear before him in uniform.

Count de Vermont has found a son-in-law—a rich

Pole, enthusiastic of the French, and enchanted with the count's admiration of Poland. For some time past, they have been inseparable. Count de Vermont negligently allowed his friend to see one of his miniatures, having first ascertained that he admired dark beauties. The good father placed conspicuously on his writing-table the portrait of his black-haired daughter. When, as usual, they went to smoke a cigar together, the gentleman perceived it. The count became quite affected in speaking of the qualities of his beloved daughter. When the countess heard the circumstance, she expatiated on the grace, talent, amiability of Henriette. The gentleman, fearful of losing such a treasure, is impatient to set out at once for Paris. Count de Vermont, who, of course, never for a moment dreamed of consulting his daughter, is in great spirits. He accompanies his future son-in-law, as the marriage is to take place shortly.

There is some delay in procuring passports, which it is no easy matter to obtain in Poland. I know not how many Cossacks have been despatched to hurry the officials. In each passport, the day of departure is indicated; and if you cannot leave in due time, you are obliged to remain three weeks longer, and present your passport again, to have the date rectified.

The messengers and couriers here are all Cossacks. They are always on horseback, and are as wild-looking as the horses they mount, either with or without saddle or bridle. One of them generally precedes the carriage; in summer he wears a gray costume, with a broad red scarf round the waist, in winter, he adds his sheepskin coat. As we are at a distance from a post-town, the Cossack is ever on the road backwards or forwards. Sometimes, when the servant brings us our letters, he says: 'The Cossack's ears are frozen,' or his nose, as the case may be; but such an ordinary circumstance does not excite the slightest attention.

Amongst the visitors staying here is a Polish prince, immensely wealthy. He is a miser. Were he not Count S——'s guest, I should have imagined that a beggar had contrived to glide in amidst the brilliant society. His coat just hangs on, and his ragged linen is of a more than doubtful hue. Soap and water seem unknown to him. He has the reputation of having starved his wife to death. To avoid keeping up an establishment, he spends all his time on visits, arrives on foot, profiting by carts or sledges to perform the journey gratis. He brings no luggage, the absence of which produces such very disagreeable results, that Countess S—— begged of her husband to provide him with linen, and especially pocket-handkerchiefs, during his stay here. Each day, a gentleman has to devote himself to sit beside him at table: it is no small sacrifice. He is a great infliction, and takes no hint as to his absence being desirable. Count S—— has repeatedly told him that other friends are anxiously awaiting his company, for so they pass him on from one house to another; but he finds himself very comfortable at Ostrowski, and apparently will not change quarters easily.

We are still in the midst of theatricals. This is to be the last representation ere Count de Vermont's departure. It is marvellous how they can lodge all the persons who come here. Numerous families arrive unexpected and uninvited to witness the performance, which was very near failing, owing to the absence of several ladies, who were to

have acted, but who sent apologies. The patriots, it seems, intimidated to them, that if they took part in any amusement, now that the country is in a state of agitation, they will beat them. This is no idle invention, but plain fact.

One of the maids was married one evening according to the rites of the Greek church. I remarked that after the benediction, the priest, laying the hand of the bride in that of the bridegroom, bound them together with his stole; then, taking the other end, led them round the church. This ceremony is symbolical of their being united for the journey of life. The contrast between Russian and Polish ideas of matrimony struck me forcibly on my return. Entering the drawing-room, I perceived that a picture had been added to the collection of family portraits; the most conspicuous is that of an officer in uniform, holding very ostentatiously in one hand a snuff-box; this, it appears, is a Russian decoration, given by Nicholas to Countess S——'s father, who had been *Maréchal de la Noblesse*. On one side is the portrait of her mother, and on the other she has just placed that of a very stately-looking lady. She says that it is the portrait of her father's first wife, whom she is expecting on a visit. She tells me that during her father's lifetime, this lady and her present husband frequently spent some time with them, and that it was on one of these occasions that her father had this portrait taken and placed beside his own, and that each time she comes she places it there, to please her. This state of society, so different from that of other nations, is peculiar to Poland. It is a matter of the utmost surprise to strangers, and most difficult to understand how it can be tolerated.

Easter was now approaching. We were invited to spend some time with a family in Prussian Poland. Once out of Russia, travelling was easy and comfortable enough; the carriages were taken off the wheels, and we were drawn, as in a sledge, with incredible rapidity. At the end of the second day, we were in sight of the Palace Y——. I remarked, in passing through the village, a free school. The peasantry were much better-looking and better clad than in Russia. The entry to the palace was not very magnificent; we passed through a farm-yard surrounded by dilapidated buildings for the cattle. The poultry were so numerous, that it was with difficulty the coachman avoided causing the death of some dozens of them. A grass-plot served as a transition from the farm to the palace. The latter was really a very sumptuous dwelling. On alighting, hot soup was immediately served; then we were shewn to our rooms: the domestic arrangements were evidently comfortable and well ordered—the family very agreeable. We had excellent music in the evening. The next morning, as Anna and I were seeking her mother's room, we went to the opposite corridor—in fact, lost our way. In passing before a door in a narrow passage, I heard most terrific screams. We knew not what to think. Anna ran after a servant whom we just then perceived. I was surprised to see her give way to a burst of laughter; so much so, that it was some time before she could explain to me, that what had so excited our terror was a national custom in action, which really is one of the strangest that could be cited. On that particular day, the lady of the house, by way of morning salutation, was wont to bestow a correction on all under her guidance. So, accord-

ingly, she entered the room where her work-women, maids, and maids' maids were assembled, with a whip in her hand, and began laying on all around her indiscriminately. She had previously paid a visit to her two nieces, who had received this salute half laughing, half crying.

On Easter Sunday, there was what they call a *bénit*. Tables were ranged all round the dining-room, loaded with cold meat, cakes, preserves, fruit, &c. When this was prepared, the priest came and blessed it. These tables remained for three days spread out from morning till night. All-comers were invited to partake of the repast; during which time there were no regular meals. This custom is general; even the poor have their *bénit*—a kind of open house for three days. Apropos of this, a lady who has three sons with great appetites, used on such occasions to take them about from one *bénit* to another, with injunctions to eat for a week. The unfortunate youths, who one day will possess immense fortunes, seemed almost starved when they arrived. This same lady, whose wealth is almost boundless, in passing in her carriage through her woods, used to despatch her sons to pick up all the broken branches, and they dared not return till they had cleared the ground. Then one inside, another beside the coachman, and the third behind, each holding his bulky fagot with all his might, were to be seen rolling along in the carriage, to the great danger of other travellers, when the road was narrow. In this plight, mother and sons arrived at the palace, to partake of the *bénit*, and, as was their wont, did it great honour.

On Easter Monday, another surprise awaited me: Countess Y——, her nieces, Anna, *Fräulein Muller*, and I were in a little salon, where we often assembled before breakfast. Sophia and Catherine were shewing us some china-plates they had painted with great taste. The subject of one was a celebrated German legend. *Fräulein Muller* was explaining the subject to Anna and some ladies who had rejoined us, when suddenly the door was burst open, and a number of young men, headed by Ernest Y——, entered, some holding concealed glasses of water, others little bottles of perfumes, and began throwing it at Anna and her companions, who soon appeared as if they had taken a bath in their elegant morning-dresses. This was another custom nearly as strange as the preceding. They could not tell me the origin of it. Were it in Russian Poland, where cleanliness is so disregarded, I could have imagined that it was intended as a hint for the fair ones to wash their faces at least once a year, but here they have so far adopted German habits as to be rather cleanly than otherwise. Anna and the other ladies seemed nowise offended at being thus deluged; on the contrary, they took it very good-humouredly. The unfortunate maids were coughing for a week afterwards, for it was with jugs of water that they were inundated.

I remarked that after each repast the gentlemen kissed Countess Y——'s hand, as they stood up from table, and each lady saluted her. The children always kiss their parents' hands after each meal.

There was great feasting to-day in honour of some Polish triumph of bygone times. After dinner, there was sent round the table an immense bowl. The gentlemen vied with each other in

emptying it, even more than once; it was startling the quantity of wine that they absorbed, for the bowl was nearly as large as an ordinary-sized salad-dish. During the day, the peasants were regaled with brandy. They arrived headed by their mayor. I heard Count Y——, pointing out that functionary, say to a gentleman that some years ago he had had him flogged three times in one week, but that he dared not but be civil notwithstanding. This oppression of the peasantry could not exist long under the Prussian government, and certainly was never authorised by it. Yet many proprietors treat them still as slaves; for a few days after, the dinner being badly dressed, Count Y—— sent for the cook; the servant who went for him returned saying he could not find him; some one present expressing their surprise at his non-appearance, Countess Y—— said: 'He is hiding, afraid of being beaten, as he was last time that the dinner was not to our taste.'

I have not spoken of the Christmas observances, which were the same here as in the part of the country where I had been residing. As I did not mention them at the time, I shall say a few words on the subject now. On Christmas-eve, they serve for supper or dinner a number of dishes, in many of which poppy-seed is an ingredient; every one in the house or on the estate partakes of the same number of dishes, at least twenty. When dinner is served, the lady of the house takes a hard-boiled egg, cuts it into as many parts as there are persons in the room, and makes the round of the table, tasting it with each guest. Then the gentleman takes a kind of thin paste-cake, and also partakes of it with all present; he is followed by the priest, who goes through the same ceremony. No meat is served at this repast; the dishes are all national ones, and for the most part either sour or tasteless; at least of those I tried to swallow, many were composed of meal.

I frequently see young peasants arrive in holiday attire; they come to ask permission to be married. Sometimes Countess Y—— is present at the ceremony. I observed that when the bride and bridegroom are kneeling before the altar, she approaches, and places on the head of each a little wreath of leaves, so small that it would not fit an ordinary-sized doll. The bride's finery consists of ribbons of all colours and shades that she adorns her head with, letting the ends hang down about her. The more she can put on, the finer she is. To this she adds a quantity of flowers, which are worn by all classes, not only on such occasions, and in the evening, but even in the morning, in their usual attire. My neighbour at breakfast, a young lady they call Countess Marie, frequently appears as if she were ready for the opera or a ball, as far as concerns her head-dress. She is rather pretty, and was to have been married to a person she met here last year, and accepted; but when he went to obtain her parents' consent, instigated by her, they refused, as she had changed her mind. The gentleman, furious at being so duped, as he considered it, declared that he would shoot any one who dared propose for his fickle lady-love; so his rival retired, as do all other admirers as soon as they become aware of the danger they expose themselves to in seeking the young lady's hand. I heard some one say: 'Poor Countess Marie will be obliged to go to England to get married! The English are so original, such oddities, that

the strangeness of the circumstance will tempt them.'

I perceive that the Prussians are detested by this family, as they are by all their compatriots. Some Prussian officers, who were in garrison in a neighbouring town, came to pay a visit here. We were at lunch. Immediately all present, with the exception of Count Y——, left the room. The visitors soon retreated, on meeting such a reception.

Count Y—— related, as a good joke, that a short time previous, a party of officers called on him, and the weather becoming so severe that they could not leave, he had them conducted to a dining-room where there was no stove, and ordered a repast to be served with all the dishes *à la glace*, to the great disappointment of the involuntary guests, who were famished and frozen. After that entertainment, they preferred leaving in the midst of a snow-storm, to intruding longer on such dubious hospitality.

Our return to Ostrowski was at length decided on. We were on the point of leaving, when Countess Y——, who had exhausted all the arguments at her command to induce the S—— party to prolong their stay, when we were getting into the carriage, actually went down on her knees to beg of them to remain. I thought at first that she felt suddenly indisposed, for I had no idea of such a theatrical appeal, which, of course, it was impossible to resist. So our return to Ostrowski was put off for a week.

MARKETS.

WE owe the name of markets to the hook-nosed conquerors of the world, but not the thing itself. In spite of its Latin cognomen, the market is a native plant of the hardy Teuton stock. Those cold, classic worthies, the Romans, were too formal and precise to appreciate the true value of a privileged gathering of their fellow-creatures, hungry for buying and selling. The Quirites had measured human nature with a foot-rule, and scored down the results on waxen tablets with sharp styles, but left no kindly margin over for errors and shortcomings. Their magistrates regulated meetings for the purpose of trade, but in a dry hard way. The customers must be on good terms with sword-bearing Madame Justice, or let them look to it. There were lictors ever prowling around with axe and rod, and sour-visaged quæstors ready to sentence the enemies of Rome.

Not so was it with our great-hearted forefathers of sturdy Gothic Christendom. They had their feuds and their vengeance, were divided by endless ramifications of hostility, and were rough and bloody enough on common days. But there were times of truce, and market-day was one of them. At early dawn, the sheriff, or mayor, or bailiff bade some rustic herald go abroad to cross-roads and clearing, to bridge and ferry, and there wind his horn, and lustily proclaim the king's peace for one day, two days, or three. A joyful time was that for the dwellers by wood and wold, for the noble shut up in his tower, for the hunted outlaw, not necessarily a thief or murderer, but possibly one who had killed 'harts proclaimed,' or beaten constables of the court of Pied Poudre. Very many men of fair average honesty, gentle and simple, dared not venture out of the forest or their fortified dwellings, save on a market-day; and then they

had licence to come and go safe and free, and were guaranteed their security by churchman and burgher, and for a few short hours were on a par with their fellow-creatures who had not been chased and shot at, and on whose heads a price had never yet been fixed. It was a blithe and useful saturnalia of peace and good-will.

Markets, in a popular point of view, have fallen from their high estate; they no longer confer special privileges. We have all the king's or rather the queen's peace, and policeman D will not collar Light-fingered Dick until informations have been sworn and warrants issued; moreover, if there be good grounds for such a caption, all the horns and charters, all the liberties and immunities ever granted by Saxon or Norman monarchs, will not save Dick from the assizes. Lastly, shops have supplanted booths and stalls; and yet, for various purposes, markets flourish, and in markets are bought and sold all, or nearly all, the wholesale goods that we, the general public, only knew in their pettiest retail form.

Markets have their regular historians, who by no means write for posterity, however much their invaluable compilations may be prized by the antiquaries of 2064. These chroniclers enjoy a world-wide popularity, and their statements are eagerly read and keenly canvassed throughout the broad limits of modern Christendom. It is not only in bucolic hostels in quiet English towns that such topics are discussed at the farmers' ordinary. Bearded Australians in red flannel and greased boots are anxious about prices at 'home'; gaunt Hoosiers, far off in farmhouses on the Ohio prairies, bend their brows over the quotations from the old country; planters in white linen jackets and palm-leaf hats, panting in West Indian heat, fall languidly to work at making out how colonial produce 'rules' in Mincing Lane. What a curious thing, with a jargon of its own, yet a weight and pithiness in its lightest sentence, is the record of a market! The mart in question is perhaps rural, possibly suburban; but in either case it has a certain cosmopolitan dash in its component elements, at which our forefathers would have been sorely puzzled. The produce may be styled wholly agricultural, but the show is by no means restricted to any hundred, riding, rape, thything, lathe, or county, or even country.

To begin with the staff of life. White Danzig wheat opens the ball, taking precedence, in price, of British and foreign *triticeum*. English white wheat of the best quality, slightly outstripped by 'extra' American, runs neck and neck with American 'prime,' and passes, by a nostril, to keep up the equine simile, the selected samples from the Rhine and Belgium. Russian hard comes lagging in at the finish, several shillings behind the rest. So much for wheat. Not that Europe and the ex-United States have the field to themselves; Egypt bids against them, and Canada, and Russia in Asia, but in a modest way. As for the inferior grains, it is curious that while English barley, as richer in the sugar due to a warmer sun, is ahead of its bearded brethren from Scotland, Scotch oats have a little the pull of English, which in turn eclipse those of Ireland. In foreign oats, Russia bears the bell away from Dane, Dutchman, and Swede.

Time was when American flour took the post of honour in our markets, but Free Trade, or some other beneficent fairy, has given a lift to the English

corn-grower and the sturdy miller of Britain, ay, and of Cockayne to boot; no flour brings in quite so good a price as 'town-made,' at least in markets in or near the great city. As for pease, many a housekeeper who prides herself on her experience would hardly be fit to buy them at the Corn Exchange. White boilers, indeed, have a domestic sound, and suggest the slab-like puddings that attend on boiled pork, but maple and gray are less suggestive. As for the varieties of beans, how few of the general public could discriminate between Mazagars and Ticks, Harrows and Pigeons. Of the latter nutritive pulse, it seems that Friesland and Holstein find the best sale for their exports.

There are quaint quotations of seeds, and it is satisfactory to read that while trefoil is fully as dear as before, clover shews a desire to bend to circumstances, and become cheaper, and that if lucerne languishes, rye-grass is recovering. There are also toothsome allusions to 'cake' enough to make a school-boy's mouth water through an entire half year, cake that must be bulkier than the noblest of wedding-cakes that ever confectioner adorned with almonds and sugar crust for the subversion of human digestions. But these cakes are for bovine consumption, and are classed with linseed, mangold-wurzel, oil, and Swedish turnips. From oilcake up to meat is no unnatural transition of ideas, and in the meat-market we find an instance of our glorious uncertainty of weights and measures. Dead oxen, sheep, and porkers are by no means the only animals that are weighed by the stone. Only a foxhunter, jockey, or valetudinarian's bodily gravity is expressed in stones of fourteen pounds, while beef and mutton are reckoned by stones of eight pounds. The unit, therefore, of wholesale transactions in meat is the stone of eight pounds; and it is curious to compare what the salesman pays with the amount which Mr Choppitt, the butcher, ultimately notes down in Mrs Grundy's greasy little red account-book. Quality, as usual, decides the question of cost; thus, if coarse beasts be cut up at three and four, large prime oxen will command four and ten, and prime Scots cattle perish gloriously, being sold for five shillings per stone of eight pounds, a higher price than any other of the genus, native or foreign, attain.

Sheep vary greatly in value. Coarse big-boned ovine monsters are five farthings a pound behind the brown mutton of the Southdowns; while Welsh mountain-sheep, Dartmoor sheep, and Ardennes sheep, are fancy articles that bring an epicure's price. Small plump calves are more appreciated than the larger and coarser of those Vitellian adolescents. In pork, little and good is an adage implicitly believed in, and the small-boned grunTERS labelled dairy-fed are worth much more than the elephantine importations from Ballinasloe, pound for pound. It is only at certain seasons, such as Michaelmas and Christmas, that turkeys and geese, and other poultry, are ranked among the regular frequenters of a market. At other times, Dame Partlet and her brood, the strutting 'gobbler' of the yard, and Mother Goose, are usually consigned to special poultry-dealers, and not competed for in public.

Butter, however, but chiefly salt butter, is a prop and pillar of the markets; first comes Dorset, then Devon, abreast with superior Friesland; while Irish butter from Carlow, Cork, and Sligo, less valued than English or Frison, finds consolation in being

rated at some shillings over that from Jersey. In cheese, it is perplexing to observe that Cheddar has somewhat the advantage of that old favourite of the public which hails from the fat pastures of Cheshire, while Double Glo'ster presses emulously on the heels of both. York hams fetch exactly the same as those cured in the farmhouses of bonny Cumberland, and Irish hams follow after a considerable interval. Wiltshire 'chaps' still lord it over the world of bacon, Hibernian flitches being far in the rear of those produced under shadow of Salisbury spire.

Hop-growing has often been described as a lottery, and so it may be with respect to yield; but some districts take the *pas* of others to an extent that surprises an outsider. It may at first seem strange that if I am a dweller in East Kent or Mid Kent, I can get seven guineas for a certain weight of hops; while, if I am a resident in the Kentish Weald, I must content myself with six guineas for the same; and if a Sussex man, with five pounds fourteen. Yet, no doubt, the exalted reputation of hops grown in East or Mid Kent was fairly earned, and the higher price is really due to superiority of produce. In flax, England makes but a poor figure, Ireland being better off in that respect; while, of foreign flax, Egypt beats Riga, and Riga St Petersburg. In hemp, 'clean old Russian' is worth ever so much per ton, perhaps as a rarity; jute is firm, coir is held, and cotton buoyant. As for wool, there is a steady demand for both Down and long-poled.

Bark is in brisk demand, not, as an invalid might deem, for its tonic properties, but as an indispensable adjunct to the tanner's yard; and in bark, the native triumphs over the foreigner, English Tree fetching seventeen pounds five shillings per load of forty-five hundredweights, and Coppice fifteen shillings more; while Valonia brings only sixteen guineas, and Mimosa but ten. The skins with which this bark is soon to be on intimate terms figure next in the list, 'market hides' being foremost on the file. These market hides are ox-hides, and come by ship, for the most part, from Riga, from Trieste, and especially from the ports on both sides of the South American continent. Far off, in the boundless plains, the Pampas, the Llanos, the high plateaux of Peru, the knife and lasso of the *saladéro* have been busy among the half-wild cattle, and these stiff and streaky sheets of undressed leather are the result. There are other kinds besides those of oxen. The high-mettled racer contributes his integuments of glossy satin to the store, and so do other steeds that are neither racers nor high-mettled—the spavined cab-horse, quiet Dobbin from the Wiltshire farm, the worn-out pony, the meek four-footed drudge that drew the hawker's cart. Horse-hides fetch from ten to twelve shillings, or three times as much as 'light' calf-skins; twice as much as those calf-skins which are classed as 'full,' and which ought, in strict grammar, perhaps, to contain the calf whose natural clothing they represent. The skins of lambs, on account of their superior softness, bring in rather a higher price than those of ovine adults. Law-stationers, manufacturers of drums, and battledore-makers compete for the elastic white parchment made from the coats of these innocent quadrupeds.

Mrs Cluppins, with true feminine logic, inducted the price of kidney potatoes into her evidence in

the immortal case of *Bardell v. Pickwick*. But even Mrs Cluppins might have found it difficult, in open market, and by wholesale, to discriminate between the varieties of her favourite tuber. To say nothing of Irish potatoes, split into septas as numerous as the Kilnavorgian clans, and known by the bewildering titles of cups and Kerry reds, pinks and lumpers, white bulls and black bulls, there are many subdivisions among English potatoes. Rocks and shaws, for instance, both of which have a hard and indigestible ring in their names, are quoted at seventy shillings, while Kent and Essex regents are rated at the more royal price of five pounds per ton.

Hay, both the old mahogany-coloured article that judicious horse-masters esteem as highly as *bonvivants* class '27 port, and the light tawny truss about which yet hangs the meadow fragrance, find place in the market along with straw and maize. Holland now sends us much of the hay our horses consume; and as for Indian corn, its huge golden heads, or the yellow meal they furnish, come to us from France, Spain, and the prairie states of the Far West. Russia is still, however, our chief reservoir of tallow; and tallow, in spite of palm-oil, and paraffine, and petroleum, is still a valuable item in prices-current. Only experts can know much of that unsavoury product which our fathers verily believed to be as mother's milk to all Russians and Cossacks, from grand dukes and hetmans downward. But if it be a satisfaction to learn that tallow in general is steady, what mysteries may not lurk under the initials P. Y. C.! Old P. Y. C., we are informed, is at forty-two shillings, while new P. Y. C. is worth an extra shilling. Town tallow is at forty-one, and rough fat—which latter would hardly be a pleasant subject of contemplation when midway across the Channel, in boisterous weather—is ignominiously rated at thirty shillings and elevenpence the hundredweight. Saltpetre, in spite of the American war, is 'quiet,' refined sugar, 'dull,' and rum, 'depressed,' with which final, and, I hope, satisfactory piece of information, we may take leave of the market.

LOST SIR MASSINGBERD.

CHAPTER X.—LOVE THE LIFEGIVER.

It was about four o'clock in the morning, or nearly twelve hours after his frightful fall, that Marmaduke Heath first woke to consciousness. Mr Long and myself were passing the night in his apartment, which was a very roomy one, my tutor upon a sofa, and I in a comfortable arm-chair. I had begged that for that once at least it should be so, for I knew the dear lad would like to set his eyes upon me when he first opened them. Dr Sitwell and his assistant both agreed that if he woke at all from his heavy stertorous slumber, it would be in his sane mind; and it was so. Mr Long was asleep, but I had so much to think about in the occurrences and disclosures of the preceding evening, that slumber had refused to visit me.

I was as unused as happy youth in general is to sleeplessness. I did not know at that time what it is to lay head upon pillow only to think upon the morrow with a brain that has done its day's work, and would fain be at rest; or worse, only to let the past re-enact itself under the wearied eyelids; to watch the long procession of vanished

forms again fill the emptied scenes, and yet to be conscious of their unreality. How different in this respect alone is the experience of age and youth, and again of poverty and competence. A young man in tolerable circumstances, and who does not chance to be a sportsman, may never have seen the sun rise, that commonest of splendid spectacles to all men of humble station. For my own part, I had never done so in England until the occasion of which I speak, and I remember it very particularly. The weary time spent in listening to the various noises of the house, now to those consequent upon the retiring to rest of its inmates, and then to those more mysterious ones which do not begin till afterwards; the crickets on the hearth, the mice in the wainscot, the complaining of chairs and wardrobes, and the clocks, which discourse in quite another fashion than they do in the day. The slow hours consumed in watching the rushlight spots, first on the floor and then on the wall, and at last exchanged for the cool gray dawn, stealing in through cranny and crack, and shewing my companions still in the land of dreams; later yet the drowsy crowing of cocks, and presently, as the light grows and grows, notwithstanding shutter and curtain, the indescribably welcome song of the early robin, the busy chirping of the house-sparrow, followed by the whole tuneful choir of birds; then the lowing of cattle in the distance, and the distant barking of the watch-dog, so strangely different from that sad and solitary whine with which the same animal breaks the awful stillness of the night. About four, I say, as I looked for the thousandth time towards Marmaduke's bed, I saw him sitting up supporting himself on his elbow, and pushing his other hand across his brow, as if trying to call to mind where he was. In an instant I was at his bedside. 'Marmaduke, I am here,' said I; 'Peter Meredith.'

'I am not at Fairburn Hall, am I?' asked he, in a hoarse whisper.

'No, Marmaduke, you are amongst friends.'

'Then he is not here,' gasped he—'nowhere near.'

'He is miles away, my friend, and he will never come under this roof.'

'Thank Heaven—thank Heaven!' cried the poor boy, sinking back upon the pillow; 'it was only a dreadful dream, then. I shall die happy.'

'You need not talk of dying, Marmaduke. On the contrary, let us hope you are about to begin a life unshadowed, natural, without fear.'

'No, Peter, I must die. I feel that; but what is death to what I have been dreaming? Do you remember that poem which came down in the box of books, from Mr Clint, last week, about a wretched man that was bound upon a wild horse and sent adrift in the Ukraine?' And then he repeated with some difficulty,

'How fast we fled, away, away,
And I could neither sigh, nor pray,
And my cold sweat-drops fell like rain
Upon the courser's bristling mane,
But snorting still with rage and fear,
He flew upon his far career:
At times I almost thought, indeed,
He must have slackened in his speed;
But no—my bound and slender frame
Was nothing to his angry might,
And merely like a spur became.

Well, Peter, that was I. But instead of the wolves which followed upon his track, it was my uncle Massingberd who followed me. He had chosen to kill me as the Count Palatine would have killed Mazeppa, but he wanted also to see it done.

All through the night I heard his feet,
Their stealing nestling step repeat.

Great Heaven, I hear them now!'.

'Nay, Marmaduke, it is only I, your old tutor,' said Mr Long tenderly, who had not been able to leave his sofa entirely without noise. 'You must not give way to these fancies: you had a fall from Panther, that is all.'

'Ay,' returned the poor boy, 'it was Panther, only I thought he was a wild horse, and not my pony at all.'

But though my cords were wet with gore,
Which oozing through my limbs ran o'er;
And in my tongue the thirst became
A something fiercer far than flame;

that was nothing; nothing to the knowledge that that man was close behind. Now that I am awake, I feel bruised from head to heel, my bones ache, my head seems as though it were about to burst, but that is nothing to—the poor lad could not finish the sentence, but exclaimed with piteous vehemence—'do, Mr Long, do promise me that I shall never see him more.'

'You shall never see him more, if I can help it,' returned my tutor with unusual energy. 'Yes, I think I can promise that you never shall.' I well knew that so cautious a man as Mr Long would not have said so much without full warrant: it was evident to me at once that he had heard from Mr Gerard all that had passed between that gentleman and the baronet in the drawing-room, and was now determined to act with vigour in Marmaduke's behalf. Perhaps the coincidence of the lad's dream with what had in fact occurred, may have helped my tutor's decision, but now that he had once passed his word, I felt sure that he would stand by Marmaduke to the last.

The sick boy seemed to feel this too, for he uttered many expressions of gratitude and contentment, while he kept fast hold of his new protector's hand.

'But mind, Marmaduke, you must now make haste and get well, and not give way to despondency about yourself. I am going for the doctor, who is sleeping in the house, and whom I promised to call as soon as you awoke, and, Peter, don't you let him talk too much.—For a boy like that to talk of death,' added Mr Long, aloud, as he drew on his slippers, 'is to go half-way to meet it.'

Marmaduke smiled feebly at this remark of his unconscious tutor's, and when he had left the room, observed: 'There is no need of any doctors; this is my death-bed, Meredith, I know.'

'Marmaduke,' replied I gravely, 'I will not listen to such dreadful things; it is wrong, it is wicked, it will do you harm.'

'No, Peter, there is nothing dreadful in the thing I mean, and it seems to soothe me when I speak of it. Since I have been ill, I have had a sign that tells me I must go. We shall not grow up together to be friends through life, as we had planned. I shall watch you perhaps—I hope I shall—and be happy in your happiness, but you will soon forget me. There will be a thousand things for you to

think of; there have been even now for you while I—it seems hard, does it not, Peter, that I should have grown up under the shadow of that man, and never felt the sunshine? They say that Boyhood is the blithest time of Life, but I have never been a boy. I think I could almost tell him, if he stood here now, how he has poisoned my young life, and sent me to the grave without one pleasant memory to moisten my dying eyes. Yes, my friend, dying. I have seen a vision in the night far too sweet and fair not to have been sent from heaven itself. If there indeed be angels, such was she. They say the Heaths have always ghastly warnings when their hour is come, but this was surely a gentle messenger. I close my eyes and see that smile once more.

'Has she hair of golden brown,' inquired I, gravely, 'and hazel eyes, large and pitiful, and does she smile sad and sweet as though one's pain would soon be over?'

'That is she, that is she,' exclaimed Marmaduke eagerly, while from his heavy eyelids the light flashed forth as from a thunder-cloud; 'oh tell me who and what she is.'

'Her name is Lucy Gerard,' replied I, quietly, 'and we are, at this moment, in her father's house.'

Marmaduke's mention of her smile had revealed to me the secret alike of dream and vision. He must have been dimly conscious of the catastrophe that had occurred to him throughout, although he had confused himself, poor fellow, with Mazeppa, and the daughter of our host with a vision from the skies. His eyes were now closed, and with features as pale as the pillow on which he lay he was repeating to himself her name as though it were a prayer.

'Marmaduke,' said I, 'we will talk no more, since it exhausts you thus; I hear Mr Long returning with the doctor, be of good heart, and keep your thoughts from dwelling.'—

'Yes,' interrupted he, as though he would prevent the very mention of that grisly king of whom he had been but now conversing so familiarly, 'I will, I will. It would indeed be bitter to die now.'

CHAPTER XL.—WOOING BY PROXY.

The medical report of Marmaduke Heath was more than cheering; it was confident. 'One of the very best features of that young man's case is this,' said Dr Sitwell, 'he does not give way. Foolish youths of his age will sometimes, as it were, fall in love with Death, until it is absolutely close beside them, poor fellows, when they shrink from him like the best of us.'

'You should rather say the worst of us, Dr Sitwell,' observed my tutor.

'Well, sir, as far as my experience goes,' returned the doctor cheerfully, 'and I have "assisted," as Mr Gerard here will have it, at the demise of many persons of the very first respectability, few of us are apt to welcome death; the majority, contrary to what is vulgarly believed, pay him no sort of attention whatsoever.'

'And yet,' remarked Mr Harvey Gerard slyly, 'he came over before the Conqueror, and possesses a considerable amount of land all over the country.'

'True, sir, true,' replied the doctor, gravely, 'and those are attributes which should always com-

mand respect. With regard, however, to our young patient, he seems determined, notwithstanding his sufferings, to be cheerful, and bear up. I have told him how essential it is to do so, and the young gentleman is most reasonable, I am sure. "I do not want to die, I wish to live," were his very words—a most satisfactory and sensible state of mind. Fairburn Hall—he did not say this, but I knew what was passing through his brain quite well—Fairburn Hall, and one of the oldest baronetcies in the kingdom, are something to live for—that is a great point in cases of this kind.'

I am sure I felt thankful and glad to hear this account of my dear friend; yet I could not help wishing that Dr Sitwell had been as correct in the cause of Marmaduke's clinging to life as in the fact itself. For I too was stricken with love for Lucy Gerard, and would have laid down my life to kiss her finger tip. It is the fashion now to jeer at that which is called First Love, as though affection were not worth having until it has first exhausted itself upon a score of objects; nay, perhaps, the thing itself is as extinct as the Dodo. In my day, however, the Great Three-Hundred-a-Year Marriage-Question was not yet broached, and gentlemen did not complainingly publish their rejections at the hands of the fair sex in the *Times* newspaper. Nearly half a century has passed over my head since the time of which I write, and has not spared its snows, and yet, I swear to you, my old heart glows again, and on my withered cheek there comes a blush as I call to mind the time when first I met that pure and fair young girl.

The worship of a lad is never lasting, it is said, although I know not upon what authority—society so seldom permitting the experiment to be made, that the *dictum* can hardly be established; but while it does last, at least, how clear and steady is the incense! how honest is the devotion! how complete the sacrifice! Since I have been an old fogey, it has been confided to me by more than one ancient flirt that they still experience a rapture when they chance to catch the affection of a boy. They are kinder to him than they are to older men; they let him down easy; they respect the infatuation which they themselves have long lost the power of entertaining. How delicious, then, must such a conquest be to a maiden of seventeen! I claim for myself the possession of no tenderer nor truer feelings than other lads, but I know that a queen might have accepted the heart-homage which I paid to Lucy Gerard. And never was fealty more disinterested. I have written down not a little to my discredit; let me then say this much in my own favour. From the moment that Marmaduke Heath spoke to me as he did, upon his bed of sickness, of our host's daughter, I determined within myself not only to stand aside, and let him win her if he could, but to help him by all means within my power. If he lived for her alone, should I endeavour to slay him? If a promise, however distant, of a bright and happy future seemed at length to be held out for him whose life had been so saddened and so bitter, should I strive to make it void? I could not afford to lose her; no. I would have given all that I had in the world to hear her whisper: 'I love you;' I would have begged myself, I say, for those mere words; but could he, poor lad, afford the loss of her so well?

Doubtless, in modern eyes, we both appear mere foolish victims of calf-love; green hobbard-boys,

dazzled with the first flutter of a petticoat. As for me, let it be so received, and welcome—although, my young readers, male, this is to be said, You never saw Lucy Gerard. Otherwise you would wonder little at my—well, at my poor folly. But with respect to Marmaduke, it must be admitted that his was not an ordinary case. Although a boy in years, he had long been sitting on the shores of old romance, and had probably more of the divine faculty for Love within him than all the ardent souls of five-and-thirty put together, who are at this moment turning their eyes about them for a suitable young person with whose income to unite their own. Since his mother died, he had scarcely beheld a virtuous woman, with the exception of dear Mrs Myrtle, the house-keeper at the Rectory, whose appearance was calculated to excite respect rather than the sentimental emotions; and now he had suddenly been brought face to face with one whose equal for form and feature, for gentleness and graciousness, for modesty and courage, these eyes have never yet beheld. I have done. There shall be no more ecstasies, reader; an old man thanks you that you have borne with his doting garrulity even thus long.

Since the days of Earl Athelwold, and probably long before them, the wooing by proxy has been held to be a perilous undertaking; we cannot take the fingers of fair lady within our own, and say: 'This is not my hand at all,' as though we were Bishop Berkeley; or, still more, 'This is somebody else's hand,' which it manifestly is not. If credit is to be given to such protestations at all, there is no knowing where to stop; and yet we must be doing something tender, or we are not performing our duty as deputy. But how tenfold are the dangers of this enterprise, when the delegate of another has at one time contemplated performing the mission in question upon his own account. Of this peril—although fully determined to speak a good word for Marmaduke—I was well aware; I even considered within myself whether it would not be safer, upon the whole, to return at once to Fairburn Rectory, lest I should do my friend an involuntary wrong. Yes, I was walking in the garden at the Dovecot after breakfast, considering this, when I came upon Lucy Gerard herself, and flight became impossible to me, being mortal. I was pacing a winding path that ran beside the lawn, but was hidden from it by a glittering wall of laurel, and, lo! there she stood, unconscious of my advent, beside—what? a statue, a sun-dial? No, a rose-tree, striving upwards by help of a little cross of white marble. Her face was westward, so that the morning sun shone like a glory on the wealth of hair that rippled down her shoulders: beside her indoor garments she wore only a little braided apron, full of pockets that held scissors, pruning-knife, the thing which is called 'bass' I believe, and other horticultural weapons, and on her head the tiniest straw-hat, with a brim obviously intended to shelter more than one—a perfect garden-saint; and at her prayers! for while I looked, she knelt upon the grass-border (to shake some insect from a rose, I at first thought, or remove a faded leaf), and so, with bowed head, remained for several minutes. When she arose, and saw me hesitating whether to advance or retreat, she blushed a little, but in her usual quiet tone begged me not to be disturbed. 'You could not

know that this is forbidden ground here; it was my fault, who ought to have told you; our own folks all know it, and so few guests ever come to the Dovecot, that it never struck me, Mr Meredith, to give you a 'Trespass notice.'

'But since I am here, Miss Gerard, and the intrusion has been made—most innocently, I assure you—may I not be suffered to satisfy what, believe me, is not a mere vulgar curiosity?'

'I do not think,' returned the young lady, with some hesitation, 'that my father would object to your knowing our little secret; you are going to remain with us some time, he hopes, and—yes, I am sure you will respect what with us is held so secret. This cross and rose-tree are set above my little sister's grave. See, that is what we used to call her—LITTLE ELLA. She of whom I spoke to you in the drawing-room yesterday.'

I daresay my stupid face exhibited more of astonishment than sympathy. No wonder, thought I, that the doctor called Mrs Gerard a sectary, and that Mr Long was so cold and distant in his manner!

'You seem surprised, Mr Meredith, that my father should have acted thus—should have placed the tomb of his dear child where he can always come to weep and pray at it, and not amid the long dank grasses in Crittendon churchyard. Is it so very rare a thing to bury those we love elsewhere than in a churchyard?'

'I only know one other instance,' said I, 'and that is in the Heath family.'

'Indeed,' replied Miss Gerard gravely, moving away as though not wishing to converse of common things in that sacred neighbourhood, 'I trust we have but little in common with them.'

'Truly, I can scarcely imagine that you and they are of the same species,' replied I, with irrepressible admiration, 'you who do not even know what wickedness is!'

'What!—I? Oh, but I am sometimes very, very wicked, I assure you,' replied Miss Gerard. She looked so serious, nay, so sad, that I could have taken up her little hand and kissed it, there and then, to comfort her. But would such a course of conduct assist poor Marmaduke? thought I—and fortunately in time.

'There is one of the Heath family,' said I, 'at all events, whose good qualities will go far to atone for the shortcomings of his adversaries, if he only lives to exercise them.'

That 'if he only lives' I considered to be very diplomatic; it was enlisting a tender sympathy for his perilous condition to start with.

'Dr Sitwell says that there is little danger,' replied Miss Gerard, quietly.

'I know better,' observed I, confidentially; 'his life or death hangs upon a thread—a chance.'

'Good heavens! Mr Meredith—what can you mean? The brain, we are assured, is quite uninjured.'

'My dear Miss Gerard,' returned I, 'it is not his brain that is affected; it is his heart. His recovery, I am positively certain, depends upon you.'

'Upon me! Mr Meredith?' replied she, while a blush sprang from neck to forehead on the instant, as though a white rose should become a red one—'upon me?'

'Yes, dear young lady—that is, upon you and your good father. This lad will find here, for the first time in his young life, peace and tenderness—'

a new existence, if you only choose, will expand around him, such as he has never even dreamt of. I do not ask you to be kind to him, for you cannot be otherwise than kind; but consider his sad condition—fatherless, motherless, and having for his only relative a wretch whose atrocity is unspeakable—what reason has he to wish for life? But you—you may teach him to feel that existence has something else to offer than sorrow, and shame, and fear.

'Alas, sir! I am nothing,' returned Miss Gerard. 'But if your friend desire a teacher to whom fear and shame are unknown, and whom sorrow has rendered wise, not sad, he will find one in my dear father. Oh, Mr Meredith, if you knew him as I know him, how tender he is as well as strong, you would go straight to him! What I have of help within me, if I have anything, is derived from him alone.'

'There are some maladies,' said I, 'against which not the most skilful physician can avail without a gentle nurse to smooth the pillow. I am sure I need say no more, except to assure you that whatever kind offices you may bestow upon Marmaduke Heath, will not be wasted upon an unworthy object. He is most honourable, generous, warm-hearted.'

'And very fortunate,' interrupted Miss Gerard, cordially, 'in having a friend to be thus enthusiastic for him in his absence!'

Her eyes sparkled with pleasure; and she held out her hand frankly as she spoke. I took it, and pressed it for an instant. A shock of joy passed through my frame; my whole being trembled with ecstasy. Passion took me by storm, and for one glorious moment held the very citadel of my soul; but it was for the last time—believe me, Marmaduke, the last time in all my life. Fifty years have come and gone, with their full share of pleasure and pain, but have never brought a moment of bliss like that, nor such icy despair as the thought of thee, my friend, caused to succeed it!

I write not in self-praise. I was not so mad as to suppose that Lucy Gerard would have ever stooped to love Peter Meredith when once she had known Marmaduke Heath. If he had so endeared himself to me, a selfish boy, who knew not half his gifts, or, at least, knew not how to value them—that I thus rudely broke my own brief love-dream for his sake, would he not draw her towards him, laden with all her wealth of heart and brain, as the moon draws the wave! It was so afterwards; but I knew it then, as though it had already been. Yet, Marmaduke—yet I gave you something—for it was all I had—when I laid at your feet, to form a stepping-stone for you, my own heart. You trod upon it, my dear and faithful friend—But, thank Heaven! you never knew that you did so.

I wonder whether Lucy ever knew!

(To be continued.)

THE MONTH:

SCIENCE AND ARTS.

THE New Year is a month old; and eighteen hundred and sixty-four is rushing away from its first fresh weeks as swiftly as any one of its predecessors. In this busy tide of human life in London it seems already long ago since Taunton greeted Captain Speke with a public dinner and

cordial speeches; since the Christmas books were a novelty on drawing-room tables; since meteorologists all over the kingdom were sending paragraphs to the newspapers about the extraordinary mildness of the season, and the number of flowers in bloom; since the friends of Cooke and Millais were congratulating those two worthy artists on their elevation to R.A. from A.R.A.; and since a mournful throng followed to the grave in Kensall Green Cemetery the mortal remains of W. M. Thackeray. A little month has passed, and new topics are pressing for attention; parliament is about to begin its annual talk; and in the stir and bustle it seems as if the incidents of Christmas-tide were forgotten. But the great stream has an undercurrent; and there are found those who think and remember; for whom last year's experience will become this year's salutary discipline, encouragement, or warning.

The astronomer-royal, in a paper read before the Royal Society, supplies us with some interesting particulars and views of terrestrial magnetism; in itself one of the most interesting subjects of modern science. By a discussion of all the magnetic storms, one hundred and seventy-seven in number, observed within a given period, 1841-1857, he is enabled to draw certain conclusions, to point out some laws of the phenomena, and suggest a theory to explain them. Any one who has noticed the swirls and eddies of water in confined channels traversed by different currents, as among islands, or who has paid attention to the movements of the atmosphere in tempestuous weather, may form a notion of the theory suggested by Mr Airy. He shews that in air and in water the general type of irregular disturbance is travelling circular forms, with radial or tangential currents, and sometimes with increase or decrease of vertical force in the centre; and arguing from these, he assumes the presence of a magnetic ether or fluid as an envelope of some feet in thickness over the surface of the whole earth, which, being affected during magnetic storms in the same way as air and water are, occasions the phenomena which have long been regarded as the most interesting in observations of terrestrial magnetism.

Whether Mr Airy be right or wrong in his theory, is a question which magneticians everywhere will be ready to discuss. Meanwhile he points out a way in which the question may be answered, namely, by careful observations with apparatus identical in construction at five or six observatories within the limits of Europe. This would be a practical way of testing the theory which we should be glad to see applied.

The Geological Society have read and discussed papers on fresh discoveries of fossil teeth and bones in Central India, and 'On the recent geological changes in Somersetshire, and on their date relatively to the Existence of Man and certain of the Extinct Mammalia.' The latter was communicated by Sir Charles Lyell, and was listened to and talked about in a way that shewed how lively an interest on such questions prevails among geologists. They have had also further communications concerning the earthquake at Manilla, mentioned in a former number of this *Journal*, from which we learn that two hundred and eighty-nine persons were killed by the shocks, and a large number more or less injured. Facts so grave as these enable us to form a notion of the violence of

the convulsion. Compared therewith, the earthquake that alarmed England in October last was but the jolt of a wagon.

In connection with geological subjects we may mention the discovery of ancient relics which was made a short time since near Rosebury Topping, a high hill of the North Riding, that looks into the vale of Tees. The district is much cut up by excavations for ironstone; and in making a new roadway at about fourteen feet below the modern surface, the diggers came upon fragments of pottery, broken querns, bones of animals, and, as is said, part of a human jaw containing three teeth. The bones comprised those of oxen, deer, and sheep, the last so small in size as to lead to the inference that a diminutive breed of sheep once inhabited Cleveland. All the marrow bones are broken in two, which may be regarded as evidence that aboriginal Britons, after picking off the meat, knew how to get at the marrow. One of the smaller bones has been bored, probably that it might be suspended by a string, and among other things which shewed signs of handiwork, were pegs of wood and bone, and a jet ring. Jet, as some of our readers will remember, has been dug out of the cliffs of Cleveland from time immemorial. No weapon or implement has been discovered, but there are a quantity of sticks, twigs, leaves, nuts, and acorns, and a considerable bed of mussel-shells, all of which have been opened. Neither are there any signs of a dwelling: hence it is questionable whether the deposit has been formed at the bottom of a pool, or under huts raised on piles. The date of these interesting relics is as yet uncertain, but it must be assigned to the Celtic period. There are archaeologists enough in Yorkshire to investigate this point, and we hope to hear of their taking it up with spirit. We conclude our brief notice with the statement that the human jaw is described as remarkably massive and large, as if it had belonged to a person of huge proportions. And that the three teeth, which are still in their sockets, are of great size and very much worn down; indeed, nearly the whole crown is worn away; a fact which testifies plainly enough to the coarse nature of a very considerable portion of this ancient man's daily bread.

Metallurgists, and all others who have to do with iron, will be interested in hearing that Mr Sorby has succeeded in making microscopical examinations of the structure of iron and steel, which, in what they reveal, are really astonishing. Judging from what he has already achieved, it may be said that hitherto nothing has been known of the structure of iron and steel; for by his method of investigation he sees particulars and peculiarities whose existence has never been suspected. Mr Sorby's reputation as an investigator of the microscopical structure of minerals stands deservedly high, but in this new field he bids fair to raise it still higher.

A scheme has been proposed, in the United States, for 'laying on' heat in towns and villages, in the same way as gas and water are laid on, from a central source. This heating of all the houses in a town from one fire, would be the perfection of economy, provided that it will cook the food as well as warm those who are to eat it. The scheme, however, is not new; it has been suggested more than once within the present century. We can match it with the proposal of

another republican to lay on the piano to as many drawing-rooms as would be willing to pay for the harmonies played on the great central instrument. And we once heard it suggested in Birmingham, that where churches and chapels stand near together, the organ-music might be laid on from one to the other.

Some of the principal jewellers in London have adopted a plan for the prevention or detection of burglary, which is worth notice. They leave a light burning in the shop all night, and cut a small opening in the door-shutter, through which a policeman can look and see that the iron safe stands untouched. Should he find the shop in darkness, that would at once excite suspicion, and he would take measures to raise an alarm, and capture the depredators. Dr Vander Weyde of New York has invented a gas-whistle which effects the same object in a different way. This instrument can be fixed in any place where gas is used, and is so contrived as to set up a shrill whistle the instant the gas is turned on. By connecting it with an electro-magnetic apparatus, a light may be produced at the same moment, the needful contact being accomplished by the opening of a door, putting a key in a lock, or disturbing a shutter or window. The doors of a whole range of shops or warehouses may be connected with it, so that if any one be disturbed, the noise of the whistle would alarm the whole neighbourhood. It can be used also as a fog-signal, and as a night-light, with the advantage, in the latter case, that by a little contrivance the whistling will begin at any desired hour, and keep on until the person who is to be waked rises and turns off the gas.

A method of stereotyping, by which the cost of metal plates may be greatly reduced—invented also by Professor Vander Weyde—has been mentioned. He prepares the moulds of paper, rendered incombustible by a peculiar process: these moulds are light, and in a dry place will keep for many years. A publisher having a stock of these moulds on hand, may cast sixteen or thirty-two plates, print as many sheets as he wants, then melt the metal, and cast another sheet of plates, and so on, till the whole book is printed. In this way a few pounds of metal suffice, with a great economy of warehouse-room, manipulation, and expense. Another advantage is, that as soon as the pages are composed, in the first instance, with movable type, they need not be kept waiting for the casting, but may be distributed immediately after the moulds are taken.

At a meeting of the American Geographical Society, Dr R. P. Stevens read a paper on the elevation and subsidence of land in the United States, from which we take a few interesting particulars. It appears that the coast of New Brunswick and Prince Edward's Island is rising, while that of the Bay of Fundy is sinking. Greenland is slowly sinking along a line of 600 miles; New Jersey, and the coasts to the east, are rising; and in the Pacific there is in some latitudes a subsidence of the water. Continuance of these movements will bring about great changes: a projection of the American continent to the North Pole; Hudson's Bay will appear as a fertile valley, with one or more lakes; the banks of Newfoundland will become dry land, and, with St George's Bank and neighbouring shoals, be added to the mainland. Steamers will then cross the Atlantic in four days.

The coast-line of all the ocean states will be carried out to the inner edge of the Gulf Stream. The Bahamas, with all their reefs and shoals, will grow into one large island; the delta of the Mississippi will extend 150 miles further into the Gulf, and all down the coast there will be a corresponding lengthening of the rivers, producing remarkable changes of scenery and modifications of climate. Judging from present appearances, we may infer that the more the land is exposed in the north, the wider will become the region of barrenness.

It is often argued, especially by political economists and professors of social science, that the present century has fewer prejudices and more enlightenment than any preceding period. Will they tell us how they reconcile the fact under mentioned with their theory? The Metropolitan Board of Works, whose annual report shews what satisfactory progress has been made with respect to extending sewers, advancing the main drainage, renaming and renumbering streets, and preparing for the Thames embankment, had arranged to open the new street in Southwark at the beginning of the year. To have the roadway completed by the required time, they offered piece-work to the paviors, who accepted it, and by working fourteen hours a day, earned three times their usual amount of wages. The work was progressing satisfactorily, and the superintending engineer was congratulating himself on the operations of his well-drilled gang, when the council of the Pavior's Society heard of what was going on, went down to the place, and ordered all the men at once to cease piece-work, and go on with day-work only. The order was obeyed, and the work, greatly to the chagrin of the chief, went on at the usual take-it-easy pace.

Now, in this instance, the men had no complaint to make of the 'tyranny of capital,' for capital was putting into their hands between L.3 and L.4 a week, instead of L.1, 10s.; and yet, with such a tangible means of judging which was most to their advantage, they reject the larger sum, and accept the smaller, in opposition, as it seems, to one of the most powerful of human motives. It is a social phenomenon which requires to be accounted for.

THE BRIDGE OF PLANKS.

SPANNING the streamlet's grassy banks
Above the shallow brook,
Stands the old-fashioned bridge of planks,
In a cool shady nook.

An alder and an aged thorn
Over the waters meet,
And the wooden path is thin and worn
With the tread of many feet.

For from the hamlet on the hill,
That ancient footway leads
Over the narrow brawling rill,
Into the woods and meads.

The sturdy peasant, hale and strong,
Crosses with heavy tread,
While the lark trills out its morning song,
High o'er his dewy bed.

The sunburnt children, girls and boys,
In wild and merry rout,
In the full prime of childhood's joys,
Pass over with a shout.

For well the hardy urchins know
Beyond are meads and dells,
And woods where pale primroses grow,
And cowslips' scented bells.

The corn-boy passes night and morn
With his full shining pail;
The gleaner rests her load of corn
Upon its narrow rail;

The rat glides by with stealthy sound
Unto his reedy lair;
Remorseful truants, homeward bound,
Hold rueful counsel there.

The gray-haired patriarch loves the place;
He sees it from his cot,
And totters down with feeble pace
To linger near the spot.

The woodman, at the close of day,
Turns to his dear abode,
And trudges o'er the well-known way
Beneath his heavy load.

And there, on summer eves, I ween,
True lovers breathe their vows,
What time the pale moon's trembling sheen
Falls on the hawthorn boughs.

Through summer's heat and winter's cold,
Spanning the grassy banks,
It stands the friend of young and old,
The trusty bridge of planks.

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